



## Midwives of the Spirit

In its outer, sensible form a candle is an object consisting of tallow and wick.

But the real secret of the candle reveals itself only when  
the match is struck and the candle begins to burn. It gives of the materials  
of its outer form in order to release the heat and fragrance within.

Only then do we see what a candle really is: its outer life is tallow and wick;  
its inner life is flame. We are talking here about transformation, of course,  
a kind of sacred alchemy. And it is precisely this alchemy that defines  
our essential human task. The secret of our identity does not lie in the outer form  
or in how successfully we manipulate the outer forms of the sensible world. Rather,  
it lies in how we are able to set them (and ourselves) aflame to reveal the inner  
quality of their aliveness. The names of God lie coiled within the physical forms of  
things; our particular and uniquely human task is to spring the trap and set them  
free. They cannot manifest apart from the sensible realm (that's what the  
sensible world is here for), but neither will they manifest automatically  
within it unless there is a further act of conscious transformation.

That is our job. Working within the raw materials of the physical world,  
we are to give “birthing” and “body” to the names of God so that the invisible  
becomes visible. We are midwives of the Spirit. Hence we are not here to build  
nests. The birds can do that. Rather, we are here to take our nests and make of  
them homes, vibrant with the qualities of kindness, order, and stability.

We are not here to amass hoards. The ants can do that.

Rather, we are here to take those stockpiles and release them into  
the energy of generosity and compassion. And we are not to live forever but to  
die well, releasing to the atmosphere courage, dignity, and trust.

Whenever we are able to move beyond the laws of the purely  
physical while still in form, we set aflame the names of God,  
releasing the energy and beauty of the divine aliveness to the outer world.  
This, I believe, is the point Jesus was really trying to make in his teaching,

“Be in the world but not of it.”

– *Cynthia Bourgeault*

*Photo by Diane Walker*